

Dear Campus Community,

Last Wednesday, April 17, 2013, the ASUC Senate passed senate bill 160, "A Bill in Support of Human Rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip." Over 500 students gathered to engage in debate for over 10 hours until the bill finally passed by a slim margin of 11-9. The 11 senators represented their own perspectives and do not speak for the entire student body's opinions. The divisiveness of the bill and the rift it created in our campus community was evident that night and has only further manifested itself throughout campus over the past week. Several students- including myself- have been verbally abused and many have even received threats of violence, all due to the polarizing nature of this bill.

Some have called for me to take direct action and veto the senate's decision, but after much discussion and pondering, I have ultimately decided not to veto this bill. However, this decision should not be construed in any manner as an endorsement of this bill. I firmly reject its one-sided narrative, and the bill's complete and utter failure to create any constructive discussion or dialogue on a complex and multifaceted issue. This bill has served to do nothing more than divide our campus, foster anger, and encourage divisiveness. The threats of violence that have been hurled at students by members of our own campus community clearly demonstrate the complete failure of this bill as a legislative tool to promote any resolution to this nuanced conflict.

I want to make it clear that SB 160 is not linked to the international Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement. The international BDS movement, which has been known to attach itself to this legislation, cannot and should not take this as its victory. In no way do I endorse the movement's call for cultural and academic boycotts that hamper freedom of speech and the exchange of ideas. In addition I was disheartened that senators voted down amendments to promote a two state solution, as well as an amendment recognizing the right to self determination of the Jewish people.

However, as ASUC President, I recognize the legislative authority of the senate. I realize that a veto of this bill would only serve to further prolong this campus conflict and further tear at the seams of this campus. It would magnify the pain this bill has already produced. A veto would not serve to create constructive dialogue, and would only once again serve to end discussion for a little longer. It is for this reason, and only this reason that I have decided not to veto SB 160.

I hope that we can use this as a learning experience and catalyst to move forward in a positive manner. Senators should consider SB 158, which pushes for a positive and constructive resolution on this issue. I urge students to use more effective and constructive vehicles of dialogue that promote substantive discussion and compromise, which can foster and maintain the campus community that UC Berkeley prides itself on.

Sincerely,
Connor Landgraf

ASUC President 2012-2013